



**SAXAVORD**  
UK SPACE PORT

**THE**

# SAXA VOICE

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SaxaVord, Western Europe's first fully licensed vertical launch spaceport, is officially ready for take-off after it was declared open by the next generation of spaceflight workers.

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## Europe's only fully licensed vertical launch spaceport declared open



*From left: Grace Wood, Mike Mongo and Harry Brazier.*

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Our facility in Unst, Shetland, received its Spaceport and Range licences from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in December 2023 and April this year.

The first launch, by German rocket manufacturer Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA), is scheduled for later this year following an engine testing campaign currently under way on the company's launch stool at the site on the UK's most northerly island.

The formal ribbon-cutting at the entrance to the spectacular site at Lamba Ness was conducted by SaxaVord's US-based space educator Mike Mongo and space-mad schoolchildren Grace Wood, 10, and Harry Brazier, 7, and attended by almost all of the spaceport's staff and invited guests.

At the same time, the UK Government confirmed it has invested £10 million in the project, which puts the UK in the vanguard of vertical launch spaceflight delivering payloads of small satellites into polar orbits.

It means the UK is poised to lead the European market in space launches, a multi-billion pound commercial opportunity that will bring a return to taxpayers.

SaxaVord Spaceport CEO Frank Strang said: "It has been a long hard journey to get us to the point where we are ready for the first launch from SaxaVord.

"But thanks only to the enormous amount of hard work put in by every member of my team, we are there – and this opening event is really about thanking them and those people who have believed in us and supported our vision along the way.

"It is very fitting that Mike our space educator and astronaut designate along with Grace and Harry have declared SaxaVord Spaceport formally open for business as we are building a legacy for the future and the future is about the children. I can also bet that both of them know more about space than most of the adults attending the opening including myself."

Mike Mongo said: "It's a great honour to join Grace and Harry – the future of the culture and industry of space – in formally opening SaxaVord Spaceport.

"SaxaVord has always been a leader, and now it is blazing the trail in Europe with a first vertical orbital launch just over the horizon – it's an awesome achievement."

*"SaxaVord has always been a leader, and now it is blazing the trail in Europe with a first vertical orbital launch just over the horizon..."*



Grace Wood said: "I love space, and I have visited SaxaVord hundreds of times, so I was super excited to play such a big part in the opening. I'll never forget it."

Harry Brazier said: "I'm really chuffed to have been asked to do the ribbon-cutting on such an important day for the Spaceport. I can't wait to see the first rocket launch."

Frank Strang added: "We also owe an enormous thank you to the former space minister Andrew Griffith and his team at the UK Government Department for Science, Innovation and Technology including obviously the UK Space Agency for the investment funding received just prior to the announcement of the general election. I must also thank Alister Jack, the former Secretary of State for Scotland, and his team also, who stood shoulder to shoulder with DSIT championing our cause."

"The space economy is growing at an unbelievable speed throughout the world and it is very difficult for government machinery to keep up with the rate of change within the sector."

"I would like to acknowledge the role that the regulator the CAA and the Department of Transport have played in helping us gain our licences. And last but not least Shetland Islands Council which bought into the dream from the start. The Shetland economy is based on its geography and now space has joined oil and gas and renewables as a driver for the Scottish and UK economies."

Pupils learning how to programme robots.

# STEM milestone as SaxaVord Spaceport hosts first schools open day

**SaxaVord Spaceport has proudly hosted its inaugural open day for schools as it gears up its STEM activities.**

Fifty secondary students from Baltasound Junior High School and Mid Yell Junior High School were invited to explore the exciting world of space and rocketry at the spaceport.

The event marked a significant step in engaging young minds with STEM and fostering the next generation of space enthusiasts and professionals. Over time all school pupils in Shetland will be invited to SaxaVord.

The open day was packed with a variety of educational and interactive activities.





RFA project director Rhys Williams addresses the school pupils.

Students participated in challenges designed and delivered by Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and SaxaVord Spaceport.

These activities aimed to provide practical insights into the skills and knowledge required in the space industry, inspiring students to consider future careers in the sector.

A highlight of the day was the guided tour of the Lamba Ness launch site. Students had the unique opportunity to witness the cutting-edge facilities and learn about the sophisticated technology involved in launching rockets.

This hands-on experience was designed to spark curiosity and excitement about potential careers in the space sector.

Director of facilities Debbie Strang said: "This was a huge first step for us towards our ultimate goal of having every school pupil in Shetland visit the site and see for themselves the exciting and inspiring work that is going on."

Mark Lawson, head teacher at Mid Yell Junior High School, said: "The pupils from Mid Yell Junior High School secondary department had a great day when they went to visit SaxaVord Spaceport.

"It was interesting for them to see with their own eyes this project that they have heard about for so long. We really appreciate the effort that went in to organising such an engaging day from all those concerned and look forward to seeing this important development for the North Isles continue to grow."

The open day was organised in partnership with DYW and received significant support from Eleanor Hutcheon at UHI. SaxaVord Spaceport extends its gratitude to all those involved, especially the two schools, for making the day such a success.

For more information about SaxaVord Spaceport and future events, please visit [www.saxavord.com](http://www.saxavord.com).